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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: ELECTIONS SNAPSHOTS #2

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¶1. (SBU) This cable is the second in a series of elections snapshots intended to provide a sense of the local environment in the lead up to the 2007 elections. More in-depth information and analysis will be reported in septels, with the snapshot format being used to convey interesting and pertinent anecdotes or facts. Post welcomes any comments or suggestions.

VOTER REGISTRATION EXERCISE UPDATE

¶2. (U) Maurice Iwu, Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) testified before the National Assembly on November 22 that INEC has registered approximately 2 million Nigerians for the 2007 election. INEC estimates that around 70 million citizens are eligible to vote, meaning that 96% of the electorate has not yet registered. He also complained that INEC does not have sufficient funds to run the 2007 elections.

¶3. (U) On November 27, Maurice Iwu told a gathering of political party leaders that INEC recently received 13,000 additional direct data capture machines. Iwu also said that although the preliminary registration period ends December 14, the Electoral Act does not require publication of the final voters role until February 14, 2007. Iwu indicated that INEC would use the statutory "revision and amendment" period to continue adding eligible voters to the roll so that no Nigerian is disenfranchised by technical difficulties with the registration exercise.

¶4. (U) At a November 20 meeting with civil society election organizations, none of the eight Nigerian citizens present had succeeded in registering. Two indicated that they had actively sought information on the location of their local INEC registration station and had been unable to find any information. A third reported she had seen a registration station one afternoon but did not have time to stop and register. She returned the next day to find the station gone and no information on where to register.

¶5. (U) President of the Nigerian Labor Congress and Edo State gubernatorial candidate Adams Oshiomhole alleged on November 23 that a leading political party (presumably the PDP) was colluding with INEC officers in the state to register party members at night. Oshiomhole claims to know as many as three party members who were approached to register at night. He

maintained that INEC is purposefully sabotaging registration during the day and registering party members at night in order to influence the outcome of the elections.

CANDIDATES

¶6. (U) Vice President Atiku Abubakar on November 25 formally declared his intention to run for the Presidency in 2007. He however did not disclose the platform on which he would run. Atiku is currently under suspension from the PDP and is not eligible to collect a PDP nomination form.

¶7. (U) Twenty seven candidates have collected nomination forms to run for President under the PDP flag as of November 28. The aspirants include Governor Victor Attah (Akwa Ibom), General Ibrahim Babangida, Governor Donald Duke (Cross Rivers), Governor Sam Egwu (Ebonyi), Professor Jerry Gana, Lt. General Aliyu Gusau (former National Security Advisor), Governor Ahmed Makarfi (Kaduna), General Buba Marwa, Governor Chimaroke Nnamani (Enugu), Governor Peter Odili (Rivers), Governor Saminu Turaki (Jigawa), and Governor Umaru Yar'Adua (Katsina).

¶8. (SBU) In spite of rumors that he will pick up PDP nomination forms, 2003 ANPP flagbearer Muhammadu Buhari plans to pick up the ANPP nomination forms. His staff expects a "respectable" turnout at the ANPP National Headquarters for the event, and if it goes as others have, it has the potential to garner significant media interest. He has also inaugurated a campaign committee headed by Prince Tony Momoh, a Lagos-based indigene of Edo State and long-time political

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activist.

¶9. (U) A coalition of seven political parties has adopted General Buhari as their presidential candidate for 2007. The Coalition for a New Nigeria (CNN) is made up of the Movement for Democracy and Justice (MDJ) headed by former Inspector General of Police M.D. Yusufu, National Conscience Party (NCP) led by Chief Gani Fawehinmi, People's Redemption Party (PRP) headed by former Kaduna Governor Balarabe Musa, African Renaissance Party (ARP) led by Alhaji Yahya Ndu, the People's Salvation Party (PSP) and the People's Action Congress (PAC).

¶10. (U) Police disrupted a meeting of opposition politicians and activists in Kaduna November 27. Several hundred people gathered at a multi-purpose hall in Kaduna city to listen to speakers including former Governor Alhaji Balarabe Musa. While Musa was addressing the crowd, armed police entered the building and arrested the meeting organizers, who were told at police headquarters that the summit was "confrontational" and should be disbanded peacefully or the police would have to halt it by force.

POLITICAL VIOLENCE

¶11. (U) Violence marred PDP local government congresses in several states on November 18. Fourteen people are believed to have been killed in Rivers State, while at least five PDP members were wounded during gun battles in Akwa Ibom after armed police were brought to PDP headquarters to quell protests over alleged doctored lists of delegates for the state Assembly primary election.

¶12. (U) Members of the Delta and Bayelsa chapters of the PDP stormed the party's national secretariat in Abuja on November 27 to protest the cancellation and rescheduling of ward congresses in the states. A detachment of police was sent to restore order. The police eventually used teargas on the PDP

members.

¶13. (U) The Catholic Diocese of Nsukka (Enugu State) is alarmed about ritual killings in the area and says that similar killings occurred prior to the 2003 elections. A priest from the Nsukka diocese alleges that at least five persons from the area have been murdered for ritual purposes in the past few weeks and that the killers are believed to be working for local politicians. The priest named at least two of the victims and described the mutilation they suffered.

ELECTION FACTOIDS

¶14. (U) In order to join the race for President on the PDP ticket, candidates must collect an official nomination form at PDP headquarters in Abuja. The cost of a PDP presidential nomination form is 5 million naira (approximately USD 39,060) and the fee is non-refundable. The PDP offers forms at a greatly reduced cost to women candidates as an affirmative action scheme. Women candidates only have to pay an "expression fee" of 10,000 naira (USD 78) for the nomination form. At least two women have entered the PDP race: Dr. Sarah Jibril and Ambassador Elizabeth Ogbon-day. However, neither is considered a serious contender.

UPCOMING DATES/DEADLINES

DECEMBER 14 INEC scheduled end of voter registration exercise

DECEMBER 16 PDP National Convention at Eagle's Square in
Abuja
FUREY